
UNIT 1 **TRAIT AND TYPE THEORIES OF PERSONALITY, DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TRAIT AND TYPE**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous block we studied the concept of personality and various issues related to it. Now we will two major theories of personality, Type theory and Trait theory of personality in detail. We will start with trait and type approach and end up with the Big five Factor model. Different psychologists have approached to explain personality from different angles. The earliest efforts to explain personality were to classify people in certain categories and label these categories according to some commonly shared characteristics. This approach finds mention as early as in 356-323 B.C. This was followed by trait approach and various other explanations.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- 1 Understand and discuss the concept of type in personality;
- 1 Discuss in your own words Hippocrate's personality types;
- 1 Discuss in your own words Krestchmer's personality types;
- 1 Discuss in your own words Sheldon's personality types;

- 1 Discuss in your own words Jung's personality types;
- 1 Discuss in your own words Spranger's personality types;
- 1 Discuss in your own words Holland's personality types;
- 1 Evaluate type approach to personality;
- 1 Describe in your own words the trait approach of Allport;
- 1 Understand and discuss Cattell's and Eysenck's approach to personality; and
- 1 Differentiate between type and trait approach to personality.

1.2 TYPE APPROACH

According to Morgan and King, "A type is simply a class of individuals said to share a common collection of characteristics." It means that people are classified into categories according to the characteristics they share in common. For example, some people prominently show tendencies of being outgoing, happy-go-lucky nature, mixing with people, less task orientation etc. These people are classified as extrovert. A number of thinkers have given their typological models to explain personality, some of which include (i) Hippocrate's typology (ii) Kretchmer's typology (iii) Sheldon's typology.

1.2.1 Hippocrate's Typology

In 400 B.C. Hippocrates attempted to explain personality in terms of body fluid or humors. He postulated that our body has four types of fluid; yellow bile, black bile, blood and phlegm. Every person is characterised by the prominence of one type of fluid which determines the temperament of the person concerned. Thus he classified people into four types which are given below:

- a) *Choleric* – people with predominance of yellow bile are irritable, restless and hot blooded.
- b) *Melancholic* – people with high black bile are sad, depressed and devoid of hope in life
- c) *Sanguinary* – When blood content is high the person remains cheerful, active and he is optimistic in life.
- d) *Phlegmatic* – predominance of phlegm makes a person calm and quite and usually there behaviour is marked by inactiveness.

1.2.2 Kretschmer's Typology

Kretschmer was a German psychiatrist who on the basis of his observation of patients classified people into four types. He used the physical constitution and temperament for this purpose. The four types he talked about included: (i) Pyknic type (ii) Asthenic type (iii) Athletic type (iv) Dysplastic type. Let us briefly study each of these types.

Pyknic Type – Such people are short in height with heavily built body type. They have short, thick neck. Temperament wise they exhibit characteristics of being social and cheerful. They are happy-go-lucky, they like to eat and sleep. Kretschmer called them "cycloid" as they have high probability of falling prey to manic-depressive type of psychopathology.

Asthenic Type – Such persons are tall and thin with underdeveloped muscles. They are also underweight. They are irritable and shirk away from responsibility. They

have the habit of day dreaming and are lost in the world of fantasy. Temperament wise they are categorized as “schizoid” and may develop disorder of schizophrenia.

Athletic Type – These are muscular types and have well built muscles and are neither tall nor short. They have stable and calm nature and are able to adjust themselves to changes in the environment.

Dyspalstic Type – This category includes people who do not exhibit any of the characteristics mentioned above but are mix of all three types.

1.2.3 Sheldon’s Typology

Sheldon on the basis of physical constitution categorised personality into somatotypes. For this he analysed nude photographs of 4000 students and classified their personality into three basic types. These three types are: (i) Endomorphic (ii) Ectomorphic (iii) Mesomorphic.

- i) *Endomorphy* – Such persons are short and fatty with a round shape of body. Endomorphs are similar to “pyknic” type mentioned by Kretschmer. They like to eat and drink and make merry. They are gregarious by nature and have leisurely attitude toward life. Temperament wise Sheldon termed them “viscerotonia.”
- ii) *Mesomorphy* – These people are muscular types. Their muscles and bones are quite well developed and they are physically well shaped. These people generally are considered to be toughminded, risk taking, assertive and aggressive. They like to boss over others. Sheldon called these personalities as “somatonia”
- iii) *Ectomorphy* – Such people are tall but thin. Sheldon called them “cerebrotonia”. These people like to remain away from people.

1.2.4 Jung’s Typology

Jung postulated personality theory based on psychological characteristics. He divided people into two broad types i.e. extroverts and introverts.

Extroverts – Such people are socially oriented. They like to mix up with people, are fun loving, optimistic. They are realistic in their approach towards life. Often such people exhibit leadership qualities.

Introverts – They are the opposite of extroverts. They do not like to mingle with people. They have very few friends. They are self-centered and conservative. Such people are dogmatic in the sense that they follow traditions and customs of the society without ever giving thought to their justifiability.

Jung’s classification has been criticised on the ground that it is not possible to divide people into two watertight compartments because a significant number of people do not fall in either of the categories. They exhibit characteristics of both the extrovert and introvert type. To compensate for this psychologists placed such persons into another category called *ambiverts*.

1.2.5 Spranger’s Typology

Spranger in his book “Types Of Man” described six types of man, taking into account their value orientation in life. Thus he had theoretical types, economic types, aesthetic types, social type, political type and religious type.

Theoretical Type – They are seekers of truth. They try to understand and make sense of the world around them through reason and logic. They are interested in finding answers to questions like what is God? How this world with diversity and complexity beyond comprehension is governed? Is there any supreme power that controls and regulates this universe?

Economic Type – They are basically utilitarian. They view things from the point of view of practicality and their economic value. For example, just imagine what would happen to a rose flower if you give it to an economic type of man. Let me give the answer, this man instead of praising the rose for its fragrance or beauty will think how to make practical use of it or how to profit from it economically. He may make a bouquet of it and sell it for some rupees thus making practical use of it and minting money from it.

Aesthetic Type – These people are lovers of nature and beauty. They lay emphasis on form and harmony and believe in making life attractive and charming. To make you understand it through an example let us take help of rose flower once again. Now imagine what would happen to rose if you give it to an aesthetic type. Do you think he will wrap it in sylphon paper, make a bouquet of it and sell it for money. No, certainly he will not behave like this. I think he will smell the fragrance of rose, praise its beauty and enamoring form and would like to preserve it in book to remind him of its beauty and fragrance or he may make a lovely arrangement of these flowers in his drawing room and enjoy its very presence in the room.

Social type – Such people are gregarious, like to mingle with people in social gatherings. They reach out for help to people in distress. They often enjoy good prestige in society. Now let us understand such person's behaviour through rose flower once again. What a social type of person will do to the rose in question. This type of person may greet friend's birthday by presenting him with beautiful flower like rose.

Political Type – These are persons who value power and influence. Such persons rank people on the basis of power they yield. Their behaviour is oriented toward gaining power and influence over others. For example, a person of this type may make a garland of roses and garland the powerful politician to win his favour.

Religious Type – This type of person lays emphasis on the unity of cosmos. They have spiritual bent of mind and believe in God. Now again can you predict such person's behaviour with the help of rose. A person with religious orientation of mind may lay the rose on the feet of the God in a church or a temple.

1.2.6 Holland's Typology

Holland's is the latest type theory put forth for the explanation of personality. According to him personality is a combination of interests, values and competencies. He classified people into six types:

- i) *Realistic Type* – These are practical person who can make things and operate machinery and many complex instruments. These are engineers, technicians and others who do highly skilled work in which they have been trained. Such people design, create and operate equipments.
- ii) *Investigative Type* – These are basically scientists, researchers and such other highly creative and innovative persons. These are people who gather data, analyse and interpret them with a view to solve problem. For example, Research scientist.

- iii) *Artistic Type* – Such persons are actually artists, painters, designers and so on. They are skilled in designing, creating new and innovative structures, artistic in their approach and they are excellent in decoration and they are dramatists, actors and entertainers.
- iv) *Social Type* – Such persons are compassionate in their approach, they like to work for others and bring relief to people in distress. To give examples of such people, we can mention social workers, disaster management persons and related others.
- v) *Enterprising Type* – These are people who are kind of entrepreneurs. They are persons who want to contribute to the society or to their business. They are the ones who take risks and are ready to take a challenge. These people also are such that they can wield influence and pressure on others and mould their behaviour accordingly.
- vi) *Conventional Type* – These are people who are traditional in their approach. They go by rules and regulations and will expect others also to follow the same. Such persons codify and regulate things like accountant.

1.3 EVALUATION OF TYPE THEORIES

The first and foremost assumption underlying the type theories is that all persons can be categorised in one or other type. But when we look at the reality we find it is not so. Some time a person behaves like an introvert in one situation and other time he behaves like an extrovert at another time, and such a person cannot be categorised into either extroverts or introverts. Besides, most people have both the characteristics, except that one characteristic is relatively more dominant than the other.

Another assumption of type theory is that a person having one characteristic will have all the other related characteristics. For example, an introvert is assumed to have all other characteristics of this type besides being emotionally sensitive and seclusive. But in actuality he may not exhibit emotional sensitivity. Thus assumption again does not hold good.

Type theories explain the structure of personality but fail to explain the development of personality. Type theory do not mention factors that influence and shape development of personality.

Type theories, particularly those based on physical constitution like that of Sheldon, do not at all take into account the social and cultural factors which are extremely important in the development of personality, Lack of considering this is one of the shortcomings of these theories.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What is meant by type of personality?

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2) How do we differentiate between type and trait?

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3) Describe the type theories with suitable examples. How do these theories differ from each other.

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1.4 TRAIT THEORIES

According to trait theory personality is made up of different traits. Traits are the building blocks and human behaviour can be described in terms of these traits. A trait generally is a description of behaviour, for example, friendliness, social, assertive are words that describe human behaviour. Now the question is do these words really describe behaviour? No, because to be called a trait it must manifest consistency. For example, if a person shows assertiveness in all situations he is said to show consistency but if he does not show assertiveness when the situation demands it he is not showing consistency.

Besides consistency of a trait should also show the characteristics of stability and relative permanency. In other words, the trait should remain manifest itself in the person's behaviour for long periods of time. For example, if a person shows honesty in his behaviour across all situations for a month or so but after that honesty is not reflected in his behaviour, then the trait of honesty does not have stability.

According to Atkinson, Atkinson and Hilgard "A trait refers to any characteristic that differs from person to person in a relatively permanent and consistent way." Trait approach got maximum impetus from the work of Allport, Cattell and Eysenck. We will be studying these in detail

1.4.1 Allport's Trait Theory

Allport mentioned two types of traits ; common traits and personal traits.

Common Traits – are the traits found in the majority of persons living in a society or culture. Thus people of a society or culture can be compared on that trait. For example. If X shows a trait of cooperativeness in his behaviours in various situations, and if similar behaviours are obtained in a large number of persons from that community or culture, this trait will be considered common Trait. Common traits thus are those which are reflected in the behaviour of most of the persons in a society or a community or culture.

Personal Traits – This refers to the unique characteristics of a person and not shared by other members of the society or community or culture. Such a personal trait is not comparable with those of others in that culture. These traits are inculcated by a person more in the process of socialisation and thus many of do's and don'ts of the parents or caregivers become part of the personality and these traits are unique to this individual. Another important aspect is that, these traits are highly consistent and can be seen in almost all behaviours of this individual irrespective of the situation concerned. To give an example, trait of parsimony, is something which an individual will show in almost every aspect of his behaviour whether he is at home or office or school or anywhere. He will for example put off the lights to economise on electricity consumption whether at office or at home. Similarly he would be very

Careful not to waste paper and will use for rough work one side pages in the office as well as at home.

Allport further divided personal traits into three subcategories: a) cardinal dispositions, b) central dispositions, and c) secondary dispositions.

a) **Cardinal dispositions:** such traits have overriding and overwhelming influence on the behaviour of a person in that they manifest themselves in all that a person does and guides the behaviour of that person. For example, Mahatma Gandhi had firm belief and conviction in peace and non-violence. Message of peace and non-violence were explicitly seen in whatever Mahatma Gandhi did in his life, whether at home or abroad.

b) **Central dispositions:** This is found in all persons and one can have 5 to 10 central dispositions. These are not equivalent to cardinal traits but one can assess the personality of an individual in terms of these traits. These traits actually define the personality of a person. Let us take an example of a person who has the traits of honesty, punctuality, parsimony, cleanliness and generosity. Such a person will be always on time to the office, and keep the scheduled meetings on time and never will waste anyone's time, will be always straight forward and deal directly with his employer and employees, and would ensure that nothing is wasted and will make sure others do not waste anything and when ever someone comes for help would be generous enough to offer help and solve the problem.

c) **Secondary dispositions:** These traits of a person are less consistent, less explicit and less meaningful for the person and hence are called secondary traits. These traits are of not much help in explaining the personality. For example, hair style, dressing sense, eating pattern or preferences etc.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What are trait theories?

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2) How do traits describe personality?

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3) According to Allport's trait theory what are traits, and what are dispositions? Elaborate.

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1.4.2 Cattell's Trait Theory

After Allport, major contribution to trait theory was made by R.B. Cattell. He divided traits into two categories, viz., surface traits, and source traits.

Surface Traits – As the name suggests these are found on the periphery of personality i.e. these are reflected in the day to day interactions of the person. Their expression is so explicit that it leaves no doubt about their existence in the personality.

Source Traits – These represent the structure of personality. They are present in less number than surface traits. These traits are not observable in day to day interactions of the person. Source traits come to notice when some of the surface traits are joined together. For example, sociability, unselfishness and humor are surface traits which when joined together create a source trait known as friendliness.

Cattell mentioned two types of source traits i.e. environmental mould traits and constitutional traits. In the development of some source traits environmental factors play more important role than genetic factors, therefore, such traits are called environmental mould traits. Source traits determined by genetic factors are called constitutional traits.

Cattell also divided traits according to the behaviour they are related to and these include the dynamic traits and ability traits.

Dynamic Traits are those which direct the behaviour of the person in a particular direction. Attitude and sentiments are examples of dynamic traits. For example, suppose a person feels strongly for girls education / women’s education, then he may join an NGO or an organisation which is concerned with spreading women’s education and offering education to girls and women. This trait will be reflected in all his activities in terms of writing articles in the newspapers and various other magazines advancing the cause of women and girls education.

Ability Traits – traits that are instrumental in reaching to a goal are called ability traits. For example, musical ability is a must for becoming a musician.

Temperamental Traits – These develop out of a person’s efforts to reach a goal and relate to emotional state and energy of the person.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Describe Trait theory of Cattell?

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2) What are the important features of Cattell’s theory? Can personality be entirely explained by trait theory of Cattell?

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1.4.3 Eysenck’s Trait Theory

H.J. Eysenck proposed that personality could be reduced into two broad dimensions. These dimensions are Neuroticism, and Extraversion-Introversion dimensions.

According to Eysenck, these are biologically and genetically based and each dimension subsumes under it a number of specific traits. He drew a scale with one end having normal dimension and at another extreme having the Neuroticism

dimension. In between the person could have in varying degrees many traits which are part of these dimensions. Let us take up neuroticism as the first dimension and see the traits under the same.

Neuroticism

Neuroticism is the name Eysenck gave to a dimension that had persons who tend to be quite “nervous.” These people tend to suffer more frequently from a variety of “nervous disorders”, hence the name of the dimension. But it does not mean that people who score high on the neuroticism scale are necessarily suffering from neurotic disorders, but it only shows that such persons are relatively more susceptible to develop neurotic problems as compared to the normal persons.

Eysenck was convinced that this dimension of normality, neuroticism, etc were true temperaments and they were genetically determined and physiologically supported dimension of personality. He therefore tried to find possible explanations in the realm of physiological research. Eysenck hypothesized that some people have a more responsive sympathetic nervous system than others. Some people remain very calm during emergencies, while some persons feel considerable fear or other emotions. Some are terrified by even very minor incident while for some even major accidents do not disturb them. Eysenck suggested that the former group had a problem of sympathetic hyperactivity, which made them vulnerable to develop neurotic disorders. Perhaps the most “archetypal” neurotic symptom is the panic attack. Eysenck explained panic attacks as something like the positive feedback you get when you place a microphone too close to a speaker. The small sounds entering the mike get amplified and come out of the speaker, and go into the mike, get amplified again, and come out of the speaker again, and so on, round and round, until you get the famous squeal that we all love to produce when we were kids. (Lead guitarists like to do this too to make some of their long, wailing sounds.)

Well, the panic attack follows the same pattern: You are mildly frightened by something, as for example, crossing a bridge. This gets your sympathetic nervous system activated, causing you to become more nervous, and so more susceptible to stimulation, which gets your system even more in an uproar, which makes you more nervous and more susceptible. You could say that the neurotic person is responding more to his or her own panic than to the original object of fear!

Extraversion-introversion

His second dimension is extraversion-introversion. By this he means something very similar to what Jung meant by the same terms, and something very similar to our common sense understanding of them, that is Shy, quiet people “versus” out-going, loud people. This dimension, too, is found in everyone, but the physiological explanation is a bit more complex. According to Eysenck, extraversion-introversion is a matter of the balance of “inhibition” and “excitation” in the brain itself. Excitation is the brain waking itself up, getting into an alert, learning state.

Inhibition is the brain calming itself down, either in the usual sense of relaxing and going to sleep, or in the sense of protecting itself in the case of overwhelming stimulation.

Thus someone who is extraverted, he hypothesized, has good, strong inhibition: When confronted by traumatic stimulation — such as a car crash — the extravert’s brain inhibits itself, which means that it becomes “numb,” you might say, to the trauma, and therefore will remember very little of what happened. After the car

crash, the extravert might feel as if he had “blacked out” during the event, and may ask others to fill them in on what happened. Because they don’t feel the full mental impact of the crash, they may be ready to go back to driving the very next day.

The introvert, on the other hand, has poor or weak inhibition: When trauma, such as the car crash, hits them, their brains don’t protect them fast enough, don’t in any way shut down. Instead, they are highly alert and learn well, and so remember everything that happened. They might even report that they saw the whole crash “in slow motion!” They are very unlikely to want to drive anytime soon after the crash, and may even stop driving altogether.

Neuroticism and extraversion-introversion

Another thing Eysenck looked into was the interaction of the two dimensions and what that might mean in regard to various psychological problems. He found, for example, that people with phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorder tended to be quite introverted, whereas people with conversion disorders (e.g. hysterical paralysis) or dissociative disorders (e.g. amnesia) tended to be more extraverted.

Here’s his explanation: Highly neurotic people over-respond to fearful stimuli; If they are introverts, they will learn to avoid the situations that cause panic very quickly and very thoroughly, even to the point of becoming panicky at small symbols of those situations — they will develop phobias. Other introverts will learn (quickly and thoroughly) particular behaviours that hold off their panic — such as checking things many times over or washing their hands again and again.

Highly neurotic extraverts, on the other hand, are good at ignoring and forgetting the things that overwhelm them. They engage in the classic defense mechanisms, such as denial and repression. They can conveniently forget a painful weekend, for example, or even “forget” their ability to feel and use their legs.

Psychoticism

Eysenck recognised a third factor which he labeled as psychotic. Like neuroticism, high psychotic trait does not mean that a person is psychotic but only that one exhibits some qualities commonly found among psychotics, and that one is more susceptible to becoming psychotic. Psychotic people include a certain recklessness, a disregard for common sense or conventions, and a degree of inappropriate emotional expression. It is the dimension that separates those people who end up in institutions from the rest.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Discuss Eysenck’s Trait theory of personality?
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2) Describe Neuroticism as visualized by Eysenck.
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3) Elucidate the Extraversion introversion dimension of personality.

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4) What is meant by psychoticism?

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1.5 TRAITS VS. TYPES

Traits are durable characteristics of a person. *Types* are collections of traits that are said to occur together in some individuals. For example, we might define *the macho type* as a person who tries to be tough, independent, courageous, or whatever the person perceives as masculine behaviour. Trait on the other hand makes a person behave in a certain way in almost all situations in a consistent manner. Honesty as a trait is an example. While we can use traits to describe persons, it is not easy to categorise a person in terms of a type. The type is not as consistent as the traits not is it as enduring as a trait.

The type is something a person can visualize from his mind. It is a construct and it may not be possible to relate it to any stable thing in the real world. Also, types tend to be a product of a particular place, time, and culture.

Types do not represent durable personality patterns; they reflect changing cultural patterns. Finally, when a type is identified, there is always the risk of stereotyping or creating a caricature of a group of people. This may not represent the real picture.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

In the present unit we studied type and trait approach to personality. In the type approach we studied Hippocrate's typology followed by Krestchmer, Sheldon, Jung, Spranger and Holland's typology. Some of these theorists have based their typologies in the psychological nature or temperament of humans while others particularly Sheldon and Krestchmer followed constitutional approach. This was followed by a critical evaluation of type theories. Then we studied traits. We introduced ourselves to the concept of traits and studied different trait approaches to explain personality. In it we studied Allport, Cattell and Eysenck's trait approach. In the end we made a comparative study of traits and type approaches to personality.

1.7 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What are different type approaches to personality based of temperament?
- 2) What are different type approaches to personality based of constitutional structure?
- 3) Critically evaluate type theories of personality.
- 4) Discuss in detail various trait theories of personality.
- 5) Differentiate between trait and type approach.

1.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

Hall, Calvin S. and Lindzey, A (1978). *Theories of Personality*. John Wiley and Sons, New Jersey

Dan, P. McAdams (2008). *The Person: An Introduction to the Science of Personality Psychology*. John Wiley and Sons, New Jersey.